



The Solem Quartet

10th February 2018

Argyll and Bute District Council's Council Chamber at Kilmory was the venue for the MAAA's 5th recital in the '17 –'18 series on Saturday 10th February and we extend our thanks to the Council for providing warmth and comfort for the audience and the evening's artists – The Solem Quartet.

This splendid group of young musicians, Amy Tress and sister Stephanie (on violin and cello respectively) with William Newell (violin) and Alistair Vennart (viola), are making waves in this genre having won the latest major Tunnell Trust award, and it became pretty obvious from their opening few bars why they had won it.

Good quartet playing requires, obviously, not only a unanimous interpretation of the written note, but also a mutual respect for each player's every phrase. Excellent quartet playing requires both in spades and that is what The Solem gave us! To witness the visual banter between the players and the obvious joy of playing together is what quartet playing should be all about.

Their programme was a mix of standard and modern repertoire; the former included a quartet by Haydn – his Op.71 No.2 in D major. One of his better known, this is Haydn at his best; it is full of humanity, wit, sentiment and his usual surprises, and was played with great affection and clarity.

The second classic was Beethoven's Quartet Op.59 No.2 in E minor - the second of three commissioned by Count Razumovsky. Mature Beethoven, this was also delivered with great authority and dynamic range capturing the essence of each movement. The beautiful slow movement was particularly memorable.

The modern quartet (the 2nd quartet in the programme) was "The Four Quarters" by Thomas Ades – a highly respected British composer. This piece was written as the compulsory quartet for the up-coming quartet competition at the Wigmore Hall in April and in which The Solem are competing. There are four very different movements; all are extremely demanding both rhythmically and technically and exploit every possible aspect of each instrument. At a first hearing this was tough going (fully acknowledged by the players!), but there were some incredible and memorable sound effects.

The Solem gave us a wonderful evening's entertainment and we wish them well at the Wigmore Hall in April. To end we must also thank the Tunnell Trust for sponsoring their visit to Argyll.